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HARRISSE'S DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA.*

BY

GEO. C. HURLBUT.

In the preface to this weighty volume Mr. Harrisse says (p. 7): "Proceeding thus with great prudence, we are nevertheless fully conscious of the uncertain and provisional character of our deductions. We know too well that a single name or a single date, unexpectedly disclosed, will often suffice to overthrow the most conscientious and systematic adjustment of thoughtful conclusions to well-investigated data. But we feel that something of permanent utility will have been achieved if we succeed in bringing into view the principal elements of knowledge which are accessible at the present time, and also in setting forth their literal meaning, their purport and their importance. This has been our sole aim, and this is the limit of our ambition."

The book is a monument of industry and research, and every scholar must feel a kind of personal obliga-

* The Discovery of North America. A Critical, Documentary and Historical Investigation, with an Essay on the Early Cartography of the New World, including Descriptions of Two Hundred and Fifty Maps or Globes existing or lost, constructed before the year 1536; to which are added a Chronology of One Hundred Voyages Westward, Projected, Attempted or Accomplished between 1431 and 1504; Biographical Accounts of the Three Hundred Pilots who first crossed the Atlantic, and a Copious List of the Original Names of American Regions, Caciqueships, Mountains, Islands, Capes, Gulfs, Rivers, Towns and Harbours. By Henry Harrisse. 4to. London and Paris, 1892.

tion to its author. Other documents, as yet unknown, will, no doubt, be brought to light in course of time to claim their place among those which Mr. Harrisse has so carefully arranged; but it is not too much to say that the order here established will not be seriously disturbed.

Part First deals with the voyages, from that of John Cabot in 1497 to that of Estevam Gomez in 1524-1525. In Part Second Mr. Harrisse describes the early cartography, the maps of Seville and St. Dié (which he prefers to call *St. Diey*), the Portuguese charts and the Lusitano-Germanic maps, of which he distinguishes five types. Part Third presents a catalogue of the oldest maps of America; Part Fourth, a chronology of voyages from 1431 to 1504; and Part Fifth, biographies of pilots and cartographers for the period 1492-1550. The Appendix contains the Wardens' Accounts of the Drapers' Company of London, March-April, 1521, concerning Sebastian Cabot, a Geographical Index and an Index of Names, and a list of Additions and Corrections. Mr. Harrisse does not call attention to a very important feature of his book, the great number of maps and charts, which elucidate the text.

The critical judgments recorded do not always command assent. Sebastian Cabot was not a model of probity, but Mr. Harrisse pursues him with a rancour that defeats itself. He considers the Wardens' Accounts, printed in the *Appendix*, decisive concerning Cabot's character, and he prints in italics the most significant lines. The Wardens and Company of drapers say :

. . . as perfite knowledge myght be had by credible reporte of maisters and mariners *naturally born within this Realm of England having experience, and exercised in and about the forsaid Iland, etc., etc.*

And we thynk it were to sore aventr to jepard v shipps with men & goods vnto the said Iland vppon the singuler trust of one man callyd as we vnderstond, Sebastian, which Sebastian as we here say was new in that land hymself, all if he maks reporte of many things as he hath hard his Father and other men speke in tymes past. . . . if the said Sebastian had bene there . . .

These passages show very plainly the hatred of the London men for the foreigner, but as evidence against Cabot they amount to nothing.

Chapter VI. (pp. 26–38) is devoted to an examination of Sebastian Cabot's character. On p. 34 Mr. Harrisse expresses a decided opinion on the subject :

“Such proofs of constant mendacity and treason show that Sebastian Cabot was capable of swerving from the truth whenever it might profit him.”

If they are proofs, they prove that the man was not to be trusted at any time ; but on p. 43 Mr. Harrisse fortifies an argument by the testimony of Sebastian, and utters his mind in these words :

“True it is that assertions from Sebastian Cabot, particularly when calculated to enhance his merits in the eyes of others, must always be taken with a mental reservation ; but, excepting his unfilial custom of ascribing to himself a credit which belonged to his father, we see no good reasons for rejecting his description in this instance.”

After dismissing the Cabots and the Corte-Reals, Mr. Harrisse takes up the unknown navigators. In discussing the nomenclature of the Cantino map, he makes, on p. 88, the following quotation from Columbus, as reported by Las Casas :

“Dice : que desde el cabo de Cuba que se ve con la Española, que llamó Fin de Oriente, y por otro nombre Alpha et Omega, navegó hacia el Poniente: He says that from the Cape of Cuba, which is seen from Hispaniola, and which he called *The East-end*, and also by the other name of *Alpha and Omega*, he sailed northward.”

The nature of his subject compels Mr. Harrisse to display on every page his familiarity with many tongues,

and he generally offers a translation, as a concession to the weakness of those who are unable to read the Latin, Spanish and other citations. There can be no doubt that he understands the original texts, but his translations are often little better than paraphrases, and sometimes, as in the passage just given, he laughs in the reader's face.

Columbus says that he sailed towards the *west* (navegó hacia el Poniente); Mr. Harrisse translates, "he sailed *northward*." *

A still more striking instance of respect for the literal meaning of an author occurs on p. 165, where the words of Bernal Diaz,

"Desde el rio de San Pedro y San Pablo y todo lo que descubriese,"

are translated as follows :

"All that which he might discover from the San Pedro and San Pablo river northwards."

The Spanish text says nothing of north or south, but only this, *from the river of San Pedro and San Pablo and all that he might discover*.

Mr. Harrisse places the San Pedro and San Pablo River on the Mexican Coast, south of Tampico, and interpolates the word *northwards* in the translation, because no discoveries were to be attempted south of that river.

He says on p. 169 : "The Rio del Espíritu Santo is our Mississippi." Other writers agree with him in this opinion ; but Mr. Walter B. Scaife, in the supplement to his work on the Geographical History of America,†

* This passage is corrected on p. 800.

† America: Its Geographical History, 1492-1892. Six lectures delivered to Graduate Students of the Johns Hopkins University. With a Supplement, en-

gives excellent reasons for identifying the Rio del Espíritu Santo with the Mobile River. Mr. Scaife quotes (in translation) the description of the river and country given by Navarrete (*Viages y Desc.*, Tom. III., p. 65) in these words :

“ They turned back and entered a river of very great volume, at the mouth of which there was a large town where they stayed more than forty days, repairing the ships and trading with the natives, in the most friendly and amicable manner. They travelled six leagues up the river and saw forty towns on the shores. This was called the province of Amichel : good land, quiet, healthy, well stored with provisions and fruits : its inhabitants wore many ornaments of gold in their noses and ears.”

Mr. Scaife argues that the expression, “ of very great volume,” might be applied to a river much smaller than the Mississippi, and was, in fact, so applied by Cortés to the Pánuco, which we regard as a small stream. The statement that there was a large town at the mouth of the river is evidence against the Mississippi, for the land about the mouths of that river was practically uninhabited. Pineda is said to have ascended the river for six leagues and to have found forty towns on its banks ; but, twenty-four years later, the remnant of De Soto's expedition apparently found no towns on the lower Mississippi. Moreover, the accounts of the soil, the healthy climate and the riches of the inhabitants, cannot be made to agree with the conditions of the Mississippi delta. On the map of 1520, reproduced in Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History* (Vol. II., p. 218), and on the great Weimar map of 1527, the Rio del Espíritu Santo is represented as flowing into a bay, wholly un-

titled, *Was the Rio del Espíritu Santo of the Spanish Geographers the Mississippi?* By Walter B. Scaife, Ph.D. (Vienna). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. 1892. 8vo.

like any conception of the Mississippi mouth, within historical time.

The question is, perhaps, one of those which must remain without a decisive answer for every one but Mr. Harrisse.

In the chapter on Ayllon's First Voyage, Mr. Harrisse quotes nearly three columns from Peter Martyr, the sole origin, he says, of the narratives given by Gomara and Las Casas. He finds it necessary, therefore, "to reproduce literally Peter Martyr's own account." This account begins (p. 199) with the mention of a voyage undertaken by some Spaniards to the Bahama Islands (Lucayas) for the purpose of kidnapping the natives :

Cupiditate igitur habendi lucaios (Lucayans), etc. ;

which Mr. Harrisse renders, with manifest hesitation, as follows :

Prompted by the lust of possessing [?] the Lucayas, etc.

This conversion of slave-hunters into squatters hardly does justice to the author ; and the rest of his text is treated with freedom. On p. 200, lines 28-34 of the Latin are condensed into three lines of English, and three lines of the Latin (34-37) are not translated, while in two places omissions are indicated in this literal reproduction.

On the same page there are six breaks in the English translation, and the following passage is represented by nothing in the Latin text :

"Sent us fifty of his followers loaded with products of the country."

On p. 201 there is one omission indicated in the Latin, and there are six in the English, and passages in

each language have nothing corresponding to them in the other. Text and translation fill only sixteen lines on p. 202, but in these there are two breaks in the Latin and three in the English, and two Latin passages are not translated.

On p. 233 Mr. Harrisse wrestles again with Peter Martyr, and confesses defeat by leaving the following sentence untranslated :

"Inanes huius boni hominis fore cogitatum exisitimaui (*sic*) ego semper et praeposui." . . .

This is helpless Latin, but why is Peter Martyr made to bear the responsibility for it?

The second part of the work, devoted to the early cartography of the New World, is creditable to Mr. Harrisse, who has given much time to the investigation of this division of his subject. He is disposed to think that the La Cosa map may be an authentic copy, rather than an autograph; and he refuses to believe that the Spanish Government made any effort to monopolize the construction of charts. On the contrary, he says,

"We are satisfied that map-making and the science of transatlantic navigation were freely taught at Seville, and that cartography was always an art openly inculcated in that city, as well as in Cadiz or Palos, without any interference on the part of the authorities."

Of the Canerio map, recently discovered by M. L. Gallois, of Lyons, in the *Archives du Service Hydrographique de la Marine* at Paris, Mr. Harrisse gives a detailed description on pp. 428-430. The map represents the world as known in 1502-1504 (to 1502, according to M. Gallois); it is well drawn, and measures 2.25 metres (7.38 feet) by 1.15 metres (3.77 feet). It is signed in the lower left-hand corner: *Opus Nicolay de Canerio Januensis*. Mr. Harrisse is of the opinion that

the map was made, or copied, by a Genoese cartographer in Portugal, because the legends are in Portuguese.*

There is a scale of latitudes extending from 75° N. to beyond 55° S.

Mr. Harrisse quotes in full what he calls the *precise text* of the two leading legends. One of these is over the West Indies, and this is exactly given according to the reproduction of the map by M. Gallois. The second legend is on the Brazilian coast, and Mr. Harrisse's text differs in a number of places from that of the reproduction. Leaving out the bracketed words, which Mr. Harrisse has added from the Cantino map, the two legends read as follows :

HARRISSE'S TEXT: BRAZILIAN COAST.

Auera crus chamada per nome aquall achou pedaluas cabral fidalgo da cassa del rey de portugall e uelle adescoiero por capitano do XIII nauos que rey mandaua a caliquit ie nel caracho induto poi com esta terra aqual terra secrem esser terra foerme em aquel a muita gente de descricacam nuos omes e mulieres como quas mais os pario sum mais biancos.

THE GALLOIS REPRODUCTION: BRAZILIAN COAST.

A vera crus chamada per nome aquall achom pedalvares cabral fidalgo da cassa del rey de portugall e aelle adescobrio in dopor capitano de XIII navos que rey mandana a caliquit ie nel caracho induto poi com esta terra aqual terra fuerem esser terra firme em a qual ha muita gente de descreva vam nuos omes e mulieres como quas mais os pario sum mais biancos.

Which of these two is the precise text ? † The char-

* M. Gallois, for the very same reason, believes that the work was done in Italy. He says: "It is true that nearly all the nomenclature is in Portuguese ; but the numerous mistakes which have crept into it seem to prove that the author was ignorant of the Portuguese tongue. He certainly copies in many cases without understanding. This map (*portulan*) must have been drawn in Italy, and very probably at Genoa, after one of those models brought from Portugal, to which the Italians at that time attached so high a value."—*Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Lyon* (Mai-Juin, 1890, p. 101).

† The Atlas of Dr. K. Kretschmer's *Die Entdeckung Amerika's*, the magnificent work just published by the Berlin Geographical Society, follows the Gallois reading, but with variations. It has *e elle, mandaua, indoto, ferme*.

acter of the words in each supports M. Gallois in his conclusion that the map is the work of an Italian who did not understand Portuguese.

Mr. Harrisse makes a translation which seems to give the sense of the legend. The last two sentences of this translation read :

" They are rather white than dark, with smooth hair. The said land was discovered in the year [one thousand] five hundred."

The final word of the text is *biancos* (translated *white*), and Mr. Harrisse has drawn upon his inner consciousness for the words that follow.

Fidelity to his author is for some reason or other, distasteful to Mr. Harrisse, though he is severe upon those who are not exact. On p. 304 he quotes and translates as follows a passage from the *Orbis noua descriptio*, in the Ptolemy of 1508 :

" Dixit, se navigasse ab Albionis australi parte, et tamdiu quo ad subparallelum ab subaequatore ad boream subgradum, 53 pervenit, et in eo parallelo navigasse ad ortus littora per angulum noctis atque plures insulas lustrasse, quarum inferius descriptionem assignabimus :—He said that he had sailed from the south of England, penetrated to 50° (*sic*) north latitude, navigated on that parallel west in the direction of the east, somewhat northwardly, and observed many islands."

Ruysch is here made to turn his back upon himself. He really said that he had reached 53°, north latitude, and had sailed on that parallel towards the lands of the Orient by way of the west. The words *somewhat northwardly* are of Mr. Harrisse's invention.

On p. 381, in Toscanelli's letter, the words,

" Ego autem quamvis cognoscam posse hoc ostendi per formam sphericam (*sic*) ut est mundus, etc.,"

are translated :

" Although I know that it is a consequence of the spherical form of the earth, etc."

The correct rendering is : " Although I know that

this can be shown by a spherical body, such as is the world," etc.

On the other hand, there are times when Mr. Harrisse is literal to a fault. Toscanelli ends his letter with the conventional phrase *vale dilectissime*, which leaves the reader unmoved; but the translation, *good-bye, Dearest*, brings tears to the eyes.

On p. 432 a brief notice, headed *Juan de la Cosa*, tells of a reference "taken by Navarrete from the Muñoz collection of MSS., the only source of information, almost, used by Spanish savants to this day." There is room under the *almost* for Mr. Harrisse's works, and the savants may be comforted.

On p. 438 Mr. Harrisse describes, as if he had seen it, a map which Behaim must have made at some time between 1494 and 1507. If no such map is found, students may still enjoy the description, and compare it with that of Waldseemüller's lost map on p. 444.

On p. 457 Mr. Harrisse translates the same expression, *via del Norte*, occurring twice in five lines, in one instance *a north-western part*, in another *by the northern track*.

On p. 482, in a foot-note, is the following contribution to burlesque literature:

"We interpret Schöner's annotation near the West India islands by 'iste est imperfectionem,' or, 'that stands corrected.'"

In another place (p. 308) Mr. Harrisse has characterized Schöner as "that overrated Nuremberg cosmographer." It does not appear that he overrated himself, and certainly no cosmographer could have written three Latin words so devoid of meaning as those for which Mr. Harrisse has found an easy translation.

His own familiarity with other tongues breeds in Mr. Harrisse's mind indifference, if not contempt, for those readers who must depend upon his English versions. On p. 499 he quotes from Amoretti's *Pigafetta* a passage of four and a half lines, and translates only the less significant part, as follows :

"When we were in the open sea, the Captain-General indicated to all the pilots the points where they had to steer, and asked them what route they pointed on their maps."

Pigafetta says that the needle on Magellan's ships pointed to the North Pole, deviating, however, a little from the true north. This sentence is left out by Mr. Harrisse, and then comes his quotation, as here translated :

"That our Captain-General very well knew, and so, when we found ourselves sailing in the open sea, he asked of all the pilots, to whom he had already indicated the point to which they were to steer, what course they marked on their charts, and they all answered that they did not mark a true course, and that it was necessary to correct the compass."

Another instance of this indifference occurs on p. 537, in the following passage :

"Ung livre, escript en Latin sur parchemin, de lettres au mole, faisant mention des illes trouvées, couvert de satin de Bruges verd," etc.—"A book written in Latin on parchment, mentioning the islands discovered, covered with green Bruges satin." . . .

The words *lettres au mole* are not translated. They mean, *with pen-printed letters*.

Much the most useful part of Mr. Harrisse's work is that which contains the Chronology of Voyages, the Biographical Notes, and the Geographical Index. The data which he has brought together in these divisions must always be of service, though his self-confident tone here, as elsewhere, fails to win the reader. On p.

717, for instance, he closes the notice of Ferrer with these words :

" . . . said to have been sent for by the Infant Henry of Portugal, to manage the famous Naval Academy of Sagres—*which has never existed !* "

Here also he translates with freedom. On p. 709 he tells the story of Carreño, who invoked the help of the Virgin during a terrible storm and was answered by the " Devil from the clouds, October 3, 1533 : ' Who cares for her ? Qué la quereys ? Qué la quereys ? ' "

The English may express the devil's innermost feeling, but the Spanish words plainly mean : " What do you want with her ? "

Some of the grave errors already noted, and many more which have been passed over, may be due to haste in the preparation of the volume ; but this consideration does not lessen the author's responsibility.

The work required, and should have received, every possible care in preparation and in revision. The original texts quoted in various languages, each with its antiquated or arbitrary spelling, especially needed exact supervision ; and this no one of them can be said to have received.

Mr. Harrisse's peculiar English frequently obscures his meaning. On p. 258 he writes of the "*defence* directed to the Pilot-Major, to construct maps"; meaning to say that the Pilot-Major was forbidden to construct maps (for sale). On p. 356 he says that " neither Muñoz nor Navarrete . . . make no further mention," etc. On page 387 it appears that a piece of poetry " was composed of two parts, the first of which being as follows." On p. 443 it is said that " we are not disposed to deny . . . that it would not be proper "; but

the exact contrary is meant. On p. 111 the vast continental land in the La Cosa map is said to *lay* "adjacent the West Indies." On p. 663 Mr. Harrisse says that he has made a list from names mentioned in various documents, and "specially from the *necronological* roll"; an original word, which finely combines the ideas of death and time with disdain for etymology.

An occasional slip in a name, such as *Columb* (p. 674) for Columbus, *Beecher* (p. 99) for Becher, or Cap Fear River (p. 212), may be overlooked; but throughout the book the Antilles are spoken of as the *Antillies*, and on p. 297 Mr. Harrisse has a bastard form, half Portuguese, half Spanish, for the name of the island which is rightly called Tristan da Cunha.

The printer has done his part to confuse the text. Almost every page presents instances of the interchange of *n* and *u*, *c* and *e*, or *o* and *u*.

On p. 31, *nanque* is printed for *namque*; on p. 88, *eins* represents *eius*; on p. 97, *continentum* appears for *continentem*; on page 104 is *isolo* for *isola*; on p. 139, *micosque* for *mirosque*, and *reperunt* for *reperiunt*; on p. 146, *Españols* for *Española*; on p. 155, *cuato* for *cuatro*; on p. 166, *mas* for *mal*; on p. 167 we have *miror* for *mirar*, and *la* for *las*; on p. 168 *hácias otras* for *hácia atras*; on p. 169, *ní* for *nin*, *ningund* for *nengund*, *descobiorto* for *descubierto*; on p. 181, *decit* for *dicit*; on p. 200 we find *iandiu* for *iamdiu*, *plarique* for *plerique*, *beneficentio* for *beneficentia*; on p. 432, *sub anni* 1503-1515; on p. 436, *addidis* for *addidit*; on p. 459, *natalis* for *natali*; on p. 463, *aislamentio* for *aislamiento*; on p. 525, Moluccas *insulis* for *insulas*; on p. 534, *fecat* for *secat*; on p. 535, *graeos* for *grados*; on

p. 537, Deux *appemondes*; on p. 556 appears for the second time a passage, erroneously printed as follows on p. 21: "Terra *nec* ab Anglis primum fuit inventa," and there translated, "This land was first discovered by the English."

This is a typical instance of the necessity for the most careful proof-reading in such a book, *nec* and *hec* (*hæc*) being Latin words with wholly different meanings.

This list of printer's errors might have been very much extended, without including any of the corrections to be found on pp. 800-802. Allowing for these errors, it may be said that those, who have time to verify and to correct Mr. Harrisse's statements and quotations, will derive a measure of profit from the study of his book.